

PH0073351

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Kentucky
COUNTY: Harrison
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE: DEC 6 1974

1. NAME

COMMON:  
Harrison County Courthouse

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:  
100 Main Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Cynthiana

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:  
6th

STATE: Kentucky      CODE: 021      COUNTY: Harrison      CODE: 097

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)

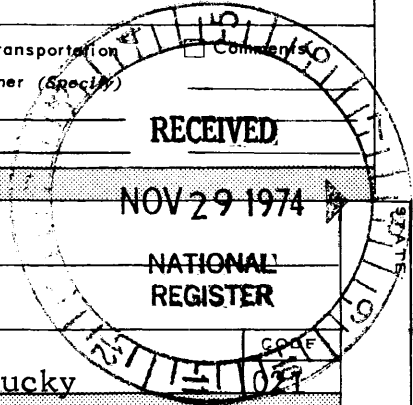
4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:  
Harrison County Fiscal Court

STREET AND NUMBER:  
100 Main Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Cynthiana

STATE:  
Kentucky



5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Harrison County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:  
100 Main Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Cynthiana

STATE:  
Kentucky

CODE:  
021

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Survey of Historic Sites in Kentucky (Supplement)

DATE OF SURVEY: 1974       Federal     State     County     Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Kentucky Heritage Commission

STREET AND NUMBER:  
401 Wapping Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Cynthiana

STATE:  
Kentucky

CODE:  
021

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

COUNTY:  
HARRISON

ENTRY NUMBER:  
DEC 6 1974

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
DATE

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

(Check One)			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated
(Check One)		(Check One)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Constructed and perhaps designed by John Huddleston, the existing Harrison County Courthouse was originally a single temple-like block with portico. The brick walls are set directly on a smooth stone foundation of long narrow blocks, topped by a handsome classical cornice apparently supported by flat Doric pilasters spaced regularly between the window bays and proportioned according to the four Tuscan columns of the portico. Originally chimneys with double chimney pots extended the pilasters along the sides above the roofline; these were removed by the time of the 20th-century additions. The original main door frame and those along the sides that probably gave direct access to offices on the first floor were severe square frames. The windows as shown in the early lithograph (Plate # 5) have stone lintels and shutters. The rather short octagonal cupola set on a square pedestal just behind the portico must have seemed proportionately larger over the single block. It has pilasters at the angles and a low curved roof.

According to historian William H. Perrin the ground floor consisted of the circuit clerk's office, the offices of the County Judge and Sheriff, and two law offices which were for rent and always in demand. The windows of the upper story were considerably longer than those below, reflecting the placement of the large courtroom, which filled the upper floor except for two small jury rooms flanking the stairhall at the front of the building. The stripped Doric pilasters and lintels surviving in the courtroom and jury rooms have a crude power echoing that of the exterior details, in spite of a lowered ceiling and other minor alterations.

In 1916 a well-proportioned wing was added on either side. Although the sense of a classical temple was thereby somewhat modified, the treatment of the additions is very harmonious, to the point of almost improving the composition of the whole. Both the main block and the wings are set well back within the courthouse square. The courthouse is still surrounded by trees that remove it effectively from the mainly commercial structures that surround and define the square.

Like most courthouses in Kentucky surviving from the mid-19th century, the Harrison County Courthouse has been painted in recent years. Although the early lithograph gives little indication of coloration, a photograph taken shortly after the addition of the wings shows the structure with red brick

(continued)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**8. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian |  16th Century |  18th Century |  20th Century  
 15th Century |  17th Century |  19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **1851-53; 1914-16**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |   |  |
|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science              | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture            | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian  | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater              | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation       | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            |   |   |  |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

The Harrison County Courthouse, built in 1851-53, is a relatively simple but attractive example of the Greek Revival courthouse in Kentucky. Two harmoniously related flanking wings erected in 1914 did not alter the basic relation of the structure to the surrounding courthouse square, which is located to one side of the main commercial street of Cynthiana, once one of the highroads between central Kentucky and the Ohio River.

Harrison County was established in 1793 out of parts of Bourbon and Scott Counties. It was named after Colonel Benjamin Harrison, then a representative of Bourbon County in the Kentucky Legislature. Harrison was also a representative at the first two conventions held at Danville in 1787 and 1788, as well as the 1792 convention which approved the first Kentucky Constitution.

The Harrison County Courthouse was built on the original public square given to the town by Robert Harrison in 1792. It was also Harrison who named the town in which the courthouse is located--after his daughters, Cynthia and Ann. Incorporated in 1802, Cynthiana is situated on the right bank of the south fork of the Licking River thirty-seven miles from Frankfort.

Harrison County's first permanent courthouse was a two-story log structure, later sold to help pay for the second one, which was erected in 1816 at a cost of \$12,000. This building burned in 1851 and the present courthouse was begun in that same year. The builder was John Huddleston, who completed the project in 1853. The rock-hewn door sills and lintels used are said to have been hauled over dirt roads from Cincinnati. A four-faced town clock was installed in the cupola in 1856 and remains a town landmark. The building was refurbished extensively in 1892, but remained barely adequate for the expanding needs of the community until it was enlarged in 1914-16.

(continued)

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Collins, Lewis. Historical Sketches of Kentucky. Maysville: Lewis Collins, 1847, pp. 340-341.  
The Cynthiana Democrat. "House of Controversey: History Shows Remodeling of Harrison County Courthouse Always Resulted in Hassle," September 12, 1974.  
 Garr, Elizabeth Headley. History of Kentucky Courthouses. Louisville: National Society of the Colonial Dames of America, 1972, pp. 78-79.

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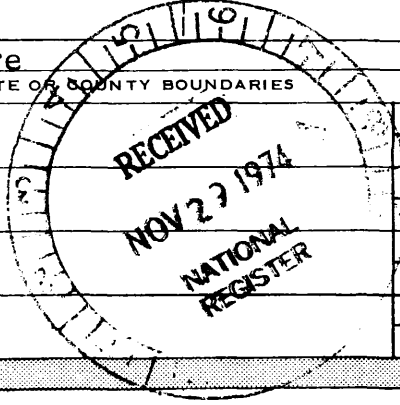
**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	0 0 0	0 0 0		38° 23' 22"	84° 17' 52"	
NE	0 0 0	0 0 0				
SE	0 0 0	0 0 0				
SW	0 0 0	0 0 0				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **One Acre**

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
**Mr. and Mrs. Richard E. Coe**

ORGANIZATION: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: **Sept., 1974**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**524 East Pike Street (WEL & GM)**

CITY OR TOWN: **Cynthiana** STATE: **Kentucky** CODE: **021**

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

<p>As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:</p> <p>National <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> Local <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Name <u>Eldred W. Spector</u></p> <p>Title <u>State Liaison Officer</u></p> <p>Date <u>11-15-74</u></p>	<p>I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.</p> <p><u>Robert H. Utley</u>              Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation              Acting Associate Director, Professional Services</p> <p>Date <u>12/6/74</u></p> <p>ATTEST:</p> <p><u>Wm. S. Smith</u>              Keeper of The National Register</p> <p>Date <u>12-6-74</u></p>
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(Continuation Sheet)

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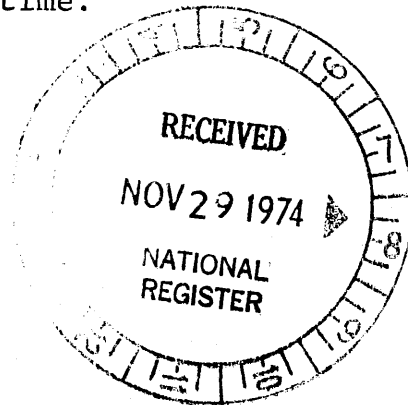
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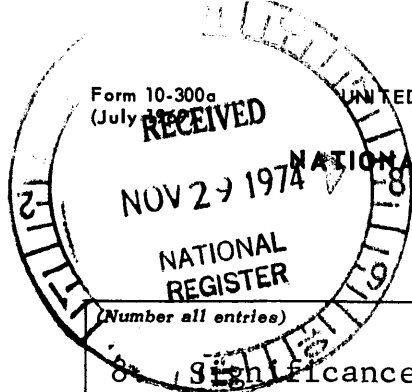
Harrison County Courthouse

7. Description (continued)

Page Two

walls and contrasting white columns, cornice, lintels, and panels above the upper windows of the wings to fill in the space left above windows shorter than those of the courtroom. The main entrance was also altered to allow for a more or less Federal-style columnar frame and fanlight. Other alterations were made, particularly to the lower story, at this time.





Form 10-300a  
(July 1963)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

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Harrison County Courthouse  
Significance (continued)

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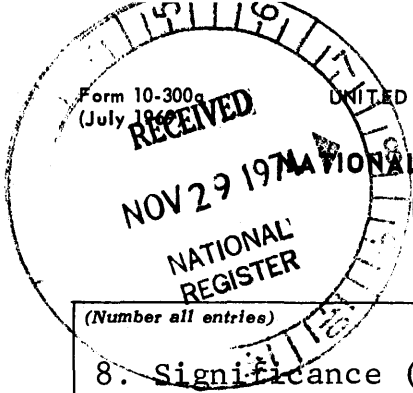
The architect engaged for the design of the additions was John T. Gillig of Lexington, who was also the superintendent for the Federal post office being constructed in Cynthiana at that time. The Cynthiana Democrat of June 4, 1914, presented the architect's sketch of the proposed additions and characteristically commented: "That the county is badly in need of more commodious quarters for the transaction of its business is beyond question, and it is not believed advisable to attempt a new courthouse.

"The present building can be made of so much use and is of so fine a style of architecture that it would be a crime to raze it. The additions suggested would meet all present requirements and for many years to come, with very little expense and no increase of the tax rate. . . . We should say that a total of \$15,000 would cover all expenses, both wings, including retouching the old building and bringing everything into conformity." On October 8, 1914, the Democrat boasted that "when the work is completed, . . . Harrison County will have a temple of justice of which all the people may be proud. It is particularly fortunate that the present building is to be retained." The added wings contained mainly office space for the county judge and clerk, a room for the fiscal court, and modernized toilet facilities.

Primarily used for county transactions, this courthouse and earlier buildings on the site have been the locale of several famous trials and provided the setting for a number of eminent jurists. "Perhaps the most famous case in the court's record," wrote Elizabeth Garr, "is that of David Sheeley, sentenced to be hanged for the murder of his wife, Nancy. One night in 1847, David and a friend came home late from fishing. Nancy, already in bed, refused to get up to cook the fish they had caught. The men proceeded to drink most of the night and awoke the next morning to find Nancy murdered. David, too drunk to remember what happened, was charged with the murder, tried, convicted and hanged. Only on his death bed did the other man confess to the murder. And the ghost of David Sheeley so haunts this courthouse that only two death sentences have been handed down from that day to this.

"Nationally-known figures who tried cases in this court were Henry Clay; John G. Carlisle of Covington, Speaker of the U. S. House

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Form 10-300  
(July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

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Harrison County Courthouse

8. Significance (continued)

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of Representatives and Secretary of the Treasury under Grover Cleveland; and Stanley F. Reed, Judge of U.S. Supreme Court. An early eminent citizen was Judge John Trimble, who was appointed third judge of the "new court" of Appeals in January 1825. President John Q. Adams appointed him U.S. Judge for the District of Kentucky."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Elizabeth Headley Garr, History of Kentucky Courthouses. (Louisville: Natl. Soc. of the Colonial Dames of Am., 1972), p. 79.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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Harrison County Courthouse

9. Major Bibliographical References

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Harrison County Court Records.

McDowell, (Mrs.) Marshall, "Early Minute Book Gives Court History:  
Records Trace Court Procedure From Its Earliest Beginning."  
The Log Cabin, April 21, 1950.

Perrin, William H. History of Bourbon, Scott, Harrison, and  
Nicholas Counties. Chicago: O. L. Baskin & Co., 1882.

Newcomb, Rexford, Architecture in Old Kentucky, Urbana:  
University of Illinois Press, 1953, p. 122 & pl. 50-B.

